



# The Keeping Quilt

*Patricia Polacco*

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## **The Keeping Quilt** Patricia Polacco

A homemade quilt ties together the lives of six generations of the author's immigrant Jewish family, remaining a symbol of their enduring love and faith.

## **The Keeping Quilt Details**

Date : Published November 15th 2011 by Simon Schuster/Paula Wiseman Books (first published 1988)

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Author : Patricia Polacco

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## From Reader Review The Keeping Quilt for online ebook

### Dolly says

We really enjoy Patricia Polacco's stories and so we look for them often at our local library. Lucky for us, she is a very prolific writer, so we still have a lot of her books to discover.

This is a wonderful tale about a piece of history that has remained within a family and helped to keep the memory of their ancestors alive. The story is a simple one, but it is very heartwarming. The illustrations are an unusual mix of black and white with spots of color, usually featuring the quilt or material that helped to make the quilt.

The story is quite emotional in several spots and the people are often very expressive. We really enjoyed reading this book together and we will certainly look for more of her books at our local library.

This story was selected as one of the books for the December 2012 - Warm Quilts and Soft Mittens reads at the Picture-Book Club in the Children's Books Group here at Goodreads.

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### Cassidy says

The genre of this WOW book is historical fiction. I would say it would best be used in a 3rd or 4th grade classroom. It depicts a quilt that is passed down through the generations of a Jewish family and with it comes memories and love. It is very well-written and engaging. It contains many colorful characters, vocabulary, and themes that are intriguing for the reader.

I think that this book would be beneficial when teaching about different cultures. It is primarily related to Jewish culture, but it could teach students the importance of different traditions, customs and ways of life that contribute to families from various backgrounds. I would also use this book to teach students about immigration.

This was a WOW book for me for multiple reasons. I really like how the book was illustrated. The pictures on each page were black and white, however, the features that the author felt were important or wanted to emphasize were in color. This was a fun and cool feature that I had never seen before. Another reason I felt this was a wow book was that I could really feel the passion the author has for her family and her culture. You can tell how strongly she feels about her family traditions and how important they are to her, and I feel this is an important attribute to have and teach to children.

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### Lisa Vegan says

I love this picture book biography about a family and their quilt.

The illustrations are wonderful. The quilt and its dress and babushka that went into making it, are shown in glorious color; the rest of the illustrations are done in charcoal. It makes for a lovely effect.

The story is very moving. It starts when the author's great grandmother came to America and how as she outgrew her dress, that dress and her headscarf were used, along with other family members' items, were used to make a quilt. The story follows this quilt down generations of the family. It's used for a variety of things including a huppa at weddings, a blanket to welcome new babies, a tablecloth for birthday celebrations, the making of superhero capes, etc. It's the story of a family and how it grows and changes with each generation but how the quilt ties them all together.

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### **Randie D. Camp, M.S. says**

I first read this book years ago in a multicultural education course I took as an undergrad. I was brought to tears in a hot summer classroom full of bored college kids but I was in awe then and reading it now, I was brought to tears again. Polacco is an incredible storyteller and it is even more incredible that her stories are true and from the heart. "The Keeping Quilt" was able to bring me to tears as a mother because there is something about sharing a quilt or any object across several generations that warms the soul. I was also delighted by Polacco's usage of color. Limiting the color to just the quilt was a great strategy; otherwise readers could get distracted by all the other lovely people and objects in the illustrations.

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### **kelly says**

A story about the immigration of Ms. Polacco's relatives from Russia and how a quilt made from worn out clothes brings the memory of far off relatives closer and binds them all together - Interesting use of color for the quilt while other illustrations are in browns

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### **Nickolas Florez says**

"The Keeping Quilt" follows the story of the creation of a family's quilt using old clothes of family members from "Backhome Russia"; the quilt reminds the family of their time birthplace. The quilt is passed from generation to generation between the women in the family. The quilt serves as many things, including a tablecloth and as a wedding huppa.

"The Keeping Quilt" follows the outlines of a historical fiction story correctly, as it addresses the impact of themes on the characters, such as keeping traditions and passing them on from generation to generation. The writer brings the story to life through authentic details, such as the formation of the quilt and when and how it is used within the family. He explains certain traditions of the Jewish culture and their importance in the lives of the women in the family. The characters themselves behave accordingly through their religion and lifestyles freely. The only "wrong" this historical fiction story does not contain is a conflict. The quilt serves as the main function of the story and is the driving force of the family. Although the story is set in the past, its themes pertain to the modern era, such as being able to express our traditions openly.

The visual elements of the story help bring this story to life. The illustrator mostly uses shading of colors and lines for demonstrating what are important aspects of the story. At the beginning, Ana's dress and babushka are colored while the character's around her are not. Then in the following images after, aspects of the quilt are highlighted through shading of colors for more sophistication and importance of content. The characters are formed through character outlining and are given specific details such as beards for the men, and dresses for the women. The visual elements bring not only the characters to life, but the quilt to life as well.

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## **Jala Collins says**

Text-to- World Connection:

I really enjoyed reading this book! It was very fair in its representation of social-cultural diversity. It opened my mind up more to the Russian culture. The book taught me new vocabulary words to use when describing the Russian culture to others if needed. I love the way book showed many things about the way eat, celebrate, family traditions, and so much more throughout four generations. I also love how the book showed how these things can change throughout the years of each generation, yet they somehow hold on to some of the traditions. The quilt that was made by the great grandmother was a huge asset to the story to show how they held on to what was most important to them which was their original home in Russia. To me, the quilt was a way of them bringing Russia with them to America. I would definitely recommend reading this story over and over to children to, because I guarantee that each time will open the door to a different point of view and it will eventually help a child to understand and appreciate diversity.

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## **Shiloah says**

Lovely story. My kids were inspired to start a Keeping Quilt of our own:

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## **Ronyell says**

Speechless... I am just totally blown away by this recent book I have read by Patricia Polacco! "The Keeping Quilt" is a beautiful picture book by Patricia Polacco that details the life story of Patricia Polacco's family that has emigrated from Russia and how her Great Gramma Anna passed down her precious quilt to her children for four generations and has remained to be a wonderful treasure to her entire family. "The Keeping Quilt" is truly one of the best books written by Patricia Polacco ever written!

Patricia Polacco's Great-Gramma Anna emigrated from Russia many years ago and when she went to school, she took her blue dress and her babushka (even though I am sure that "babushka" means "grandmother" in Russian). Soon afterwards, when Anna's dress and babushka got old and Anna's mother made her a new dress, her mother decided to make a quilt out of Anna's old dress and babushka so that way it would remind them of their home in Russia. When Anna grew up, she got married to Patricia Polacco's Great-Grandpa Sasha and Anna's quilt was used as a huppa for her and Sasha's wedding. Later on, Patricia Polacco's grandmother Carle was born and Anna wrapped her quilt around her new born daughter.

What can I say? This is clearly Patricia Polacco's most memorable and greatest work ever written! Patricia Polacco has done an excellent job at both writing and illustrating this book as it details the story about how important Great-Gramma Anna's quilt was to the family. What was so inspiring about this book is that it details Patricia Polacco's family history and I loved the way that she put so much emphasis on how the keeping quilt was such an important family heirloom and I loved how her family used the quilt for their family traditions such as using it as a huppa for each family member's weddings. I can easily relate to the importance of family heritage in this book as my family has special heirlooms that were passed down from generation to generation and we get the opportunity to learn more about our heritages through our family heirlooms. It was also interesting learning about Russian traditions within Patricia Polacco's family since I am always interested in learning about different traditions from other countries. Patricia Polacco's illustrations are extremely beautiful and creative as the illustrations are shown in mainly black and white

colors, however the quilt is the only image in the book that is colored and it helps signify the importance of the quilt to the entire family. I also loved the way that Patricia Polacco made her family look extremely realistic and heartwarming as they have realistic facial expressions that range from sadness to happiness, which truly made me feel so much emotion from the characters.

Overall, "The Keeping Quilt" is a truly beautiful and inspiring book about the importance of celebrating your family traditions and the importance of being a true family that many children will easily enjoy for many years! I would recommend this book to children ages five and up since some of the Russian terms like "babushka" and "huppa" might be too difficult for smaller children to understand.

**Review is also on: Rabbit Ears Book Blog**

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### **Kendall Hagerty says**

'The Keeping Quilt' by Patricia Polacco is very different from the other books I reviewed. This story is about a family tradition with quilt making. This Russian family created a quilt with all their keepsakes to pass down from generation to generation. The family members used many different items that had important value to them to create the quilt. This quilt was used during many celebrations in the family as a tradition.

This story is fictionalized family history because we learn about this Russian family's tradition of quilt making and celebrating. I think this book was written to celebrate the culture and to celebrate the traditions family's hold dear to them. The illustrations were extremely important because the pictures were drawn in ink, yet the only colored aspect was the quilt. This emphasizes the importance of the quilt to the family, the traditions and the memories the quilt holds. I loved reading about this different culture because it is so different from mine.

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### **Christi says**

The story is of the narrator's great-grandma (Anna). Anna was originally a dirt farmer, until she and her family moved to America, where her father loaded wagons and the rest of the family made fake flowers. The crowded and busy city was the opposite of the lifestyle Anna was used to back in Russia. At first Anna could not understand English at all, but after 6 months she was speaking English, though her parents never learned and she had to speak English for them too. She had very little left from her home, just her dress and her babushka. Her dress got too small, so after a new dress was made she took the old dress. She also took the babushka, and old pieces of clothing from her family members. Anna and her mother made a quilt, to remind them of home. Anna, her mother, and the neighborhood ladies got together. They cut out shapes, animals, flowers out of the scraps. The edges of the quilt were from Anna's babushka. On Fridays, the quilt was the table cloth for the sabbath. Anna fell in love, and Sasha gave Anna a gold coin for wealth, a flower for love, and rock salt so their lives would have flavor. Anna accepted; they were engaged. When they were married, the quilt was part of the wedding. When her daughter was born, Anna wrapped her daughter in the quilt. Their daughter grew up, fell in love, and the quilt was part of all of it. When Anna grew older, the quilt kept her legs warm. The quilt was there when Anna died. The quilt welcomed the narrator into the world, like it did her family before her. It was used as a table cloth. She used it at night, and her mother would tell her which piece of cloth belonged to which family member.

The story is, once again, a fictional family's tale, though it is steeped in tradition. Though the story covers a

large period of time, the passage of time can be seen in the changes of the cultural and religious traditions described in the story. The integration of male and female celebrations, the addition of non-Jewish celebrants into a wedding, as signal different periods of time. The artwork in the story add meaning to the text. The red of the babushka and the blue of the dress are the only colors until the quilt is made. From then on, the quilt is the only thing in color. This helps the reader connect the quilt to different celebrations and important moments, such as when the quilt was in the proposal scene but not mentioned in the text of that scene.

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### **Patricia says**

Patricia Polacco read this book to me at the IRC luncheon Saturday, March 21, 2009. What a wonderful read. The red babushka highlighted on the cover and the red fabric throughout the book chronicles the life of the quilt and the life of the family. This masterfully crafted, simple yet powerful, book reminds us of the importance of traditions in families. It doesn't matter what the tradition, tradition gives structure to a child's life, even when that child grows up. The caring, nurturing, loving grandmother is a grandmother in any culture regardless of race or religion. Listening to Polacco read this book to us was like going back to our own mothers and grandmothers, smelling their cooking, paying attention to their admonitions, and listening to their stories. The tone of this book, whether I read it myself, or I listen to Patricia Polacco read it is one of quiet, nostalgic, reflection. It is for sure a never ending story. Polacco is hoping to add to this book again, as she patiently waits for her kids, now approaching 40, to have their own children to wrap in The Keeping Quilt.

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### **Kathryn says**

This is a lovely true story about family tradition as the quilt, made from an immigrant daughter's outgrown babushka, is passed down through the generations, making appearances at many important events. Polacco shows how religion and culture have evolved some through the generations of Jewish marriages down to Polacco's own. I appreciate the idea of the illustrations with the quilt being the only thing in color, though I'm not sure the overall illustrations really wowed me. However, I think this book will be very touching for anyone who has appreciated a treasured family heirloom and known the value in its ties to tradition.

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### **Tedi Tsopelas says**

In "The Keeping Quilt" by Patricia Polacco, we are introduced to generations of a family who came to the United States from Russia. The story's plot articulates the use of old clothing and materials people of the family brought together in order to create a quilt. From scraps of clothing to babushka dolls, the quilt was sewed together to be used by the family during different events in their lifetimes such as gatherings, engagements, weddings, births and deaths. The quilt created many traditions and would now keep being passed on by generation to generation. The illustrations in this book were very flattering to the story. The use of saturated colors brought attention mostly to what the author was revealing meaning from, the quilt. Although the first thing the reader sees on the page is the quilt, the sepia toned illustrations of the people create a whole for the image; it gives more character to who is who in the story. "The Keeping Quilt" certainly allows the reader to step into an unfamiliar culture and exposes us to the traditions of a family full of love. Patricia Polacco gives the reader examples of how other cultures may celebrate specific events such as engagements. "To show he wanted to be her husband, he gave Anna a gold coin, a dried flower, and a piece of rock salt, all tied into a linen handkerchief. The gold was for wealth, the flower for love, and the salt

so their lives would have flavor”. She also uses vocabulary such as babushka and kulich to expose others of the values this specific culture has. Being multicultural myself, I had a very good time learning about the Russian culture and to compare some of the similarities and differences with other cultures I know of.

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## **Kathy Davie says**

A children's storybook that revolved around a quilt of memories.

### **My Take**

It was sweet enough—and I'm already prejudiced towards it as I am a quilter. And I want to make one of these. I absolutely adored the colorful animals and flowers that were appliqued on this quilt! I also loved the many, many ways in which this quilt was used and loved [although I did hold my breath when it was used as a tablecloth...eek].

It was more a story of family, keeping alive the memory of those who have passed on.

It's also a very personal story for the author as it's of her family and their family memories. Memories that took me back to my own family and family picnics at my grandparents'.

A gold coin, a dried flower, and a piece of rock salt...  
Bread...  
Wine...

On the illustrations, I'm split. Polacco did a great job of rendering family portraits, and I do appreciate that using charcoal for the people and color only for the quilt really made the quilt itself stand out---thank you very much, Patricia Polacco! On the other hand, the contrast between the styles was jarring. It could well be that my love for fabric really wanted the clothing everyone was wearing to be more vivid. I did adore the evolution of fashion with each flip of a page.

I'm also split on the way in which Polacco told her story. I wanted more. More of the cultural traditions Polacco's family brought from Russia. I appreciated the Jewish traditions---love the quilt as a huppa---but there must have been *some* Russian influence on it all!?? Or did I just not notice...?

I wish that Polacco had been more clear about Great-Gamma Anna's age when she first arrived in America--as well as a re-wording of "Great-Grandpa Sasha" with whom she fell in love. Took me a bit aback until I re-worded it in my mind to "Sasha, who became my great-grandpa". That first page had me looking for an old lady in the crowd. And why is there no name for Great-Gamma Anna's mother??

...wealth, love, and flavor for their lives  
...never know hunger  
...for laughter

### **The Story**

From the beginning with Great-Gamma Anna who comes across the ocean from Russia with her parents to America, and we follow the author's family to now, always with the quilt to keep memories alive.

### **The Characters**

**Great-Gamma Anna** who married **Great-Grandpa Sasha** had **Grandma Carle** who married **Grandpa George**, and they had **Mary Ellen** who had **Patricia** who looks forward to keeping on with the quilt.

### **The Cover**

The cover is very representative of the story with generations of women admiring the colorful quilt of animals and flowers.

The title is of a very important memory, *The Keeping Quilt* that keeps alive the memories of those who have made possible the family of today.

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